

about what it means to you please visit our press release and the photo identification section of our site ([//register-to-vote/need-id/](http://register-to-vote/need-id/))



**REGISTER TO  
VOTE**  
([HTTP://VOTETE](http://VOTETE)  
-TO-VOTE/)

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## FAQ

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## FAQ

We hope that you will take a moment to review these pages, as you may find the answers to questions of your own. We encourage you to explore our website for more detailed information on elections and voting in Texas. We hope you find this useful, and we appreciate this opportunity to serve you. **Note: We have grouped questions and answers in categories and provided links to additional information when needed.**

**When does the new photo identification law go into effect?**

- A. The new photo identification requirement is effective immediately.

**What kind of identification will be required to qualify to vote in person under the new program?**

- A. A voter will be required to show one of the following forms of photo identification at the polling location before the voter will be permitted to cast a vote.
- Texas driver license issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)
  - Texas Election Identification Certificate issued by DPS
  - Texas personal identification card issued by DPS
  - Texas concealed handgun license issued by DPS
  - United States military identification card containing the person's photograph
  - United States citizenship certificate containing the person's photograph
  - United States passport

**My ID is expired. Will it still work?**

- A. With the exception of the U.S. citizenship certificate, the identification must be current or have expired no more than 60 days before being presented for voter qualification at the polling place.

**But what if a voter does not have any of these forms of photo ID? Are there any exceptions?**

- A. If a voter does not have a permanent disability exemption (addressed below) indicated on his or her voter registration certificate AND the voter does not have any of the photo identifications indicated above at the time of voting, the voter may cast a provisional ballot at the polls. However, in order to have the provisional ballot counted, the voter will be required to visit the voter registrar's office within six calendar days of the date of the election to either present one of the above forms of photo ID OR submit one of the temporary affidavits addressed below (e.g., religious objection or natural disaster) in the presence of the county voter registrar while attesting to the fact that he or she does not have any of the required photo IDs.

A **permanent exemption** is available for voters with documented disabilities. Voters with a disability may apply with the county voter registrar for a permanent exemption. The application must contain written documentation from either the U.S. Social Security Administration evidencing the applicant's disability, or from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs evidencing a disability rating of at least 50 percent. In addition, the applicant must state that he or she has no valid form of photo identification. Those who obtain a disability exemption will be allowed to vote by presenting a voter registration certificate reflecting the exemption.

Affidavits are available for voters who have a consistent religious objection to being photographed and for voters who do not have any photo identification as a result of certain natural disasters as declared by the President of the United States or the Texas Governor within 45 days of the day the ballot was cast.

**If I have a government-issued ID that contains my photo and it is not on the list above, may I use it?**

- A.

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If you do not have one of the forms of photo IDs listed above and your voter registration certificate does not have a disability exemption noted, you will only be eligible to cast a provisional ballot.

**My name on my approved photo ID does not exactly match my name on my voter registration card. Can I still vote?**

- A. Election officials will review the ID and if a name is "substantially similar" to the name on their list of registered voters, you will still be able to vote, but you will also have to submit an affidavit stating that you are the same person on the list of registered voters.

**What does "substantially similar" mean?**

- A. A voter's name is considered substantially similar if one or more of the following circumstances applies:
1. The name on the ID is slightly different from one or more of the name fields on the official list of registered voters.
  2. The name on the voter's ID or on list of registered voters is a customary variation of the voter's formal name. For example, Bill for William, or Beto for Alberto.
  3. The voter's name contains an initial, middle name, or former name that is either not on the official list of registered voters or on the voter's ID.
  4. A first name, middle name, former name or initial of the voter's name occupies a different field on the presented ID document than it does on the list of registered voters.

In considering whether a name is substantially similar, election officials will also look at whether information on the presented ID matches elements of the voter's information on the official list of registered voters such as the voter's residence address or date of birth.

**Does the new photo ID requirement apply to voting by mail?**

- A. The new requirement does not change the process for voting by mail.

**Does the address on my photo identification have to match my address on the official list of registered voters at the time of voting?**

- A. The new requirement makes no determination on voter address matching criteria; therefore, there is no address matching requirement.

**When is the DPS Election Identification Certificate going to be available?**

- A. The Election Identification Certificate is now available. Information regarding how to obtain an election identification certificate can be found at [www.dps.texas.gov](http://www.dps.texas.gov) (<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/electionID.htm>). You may also contact DPS by telephone at (512) 424-2600 for more information.

**What happens if I refuse to show proof of identity?**

- A. Voters who refuse to show proof of identity will be allowed to vote by provisional ballot. However, please be advised that a refusal to show ID is not a valid ground for casting a provisional ballot, and it is likely that the voter's ballot will be rejected by the ballot board.

**I'm not sure if I'm registered; how can I confirm my voter registration status?**

- A. You can confirm your registration status on this website by going to [Am I Registered to Vote?](https://team1.sos.state.tx.us/voterws/viw/faces/Introduction.jsp) (<https://team1.sos.state.tx.us/voterws/viw/faces/Introduction.jsp>), where you will select one of three methods for conducting your search. You can base your search on: 1. your Voter Unique Identifier (VUID), which appears on your voter registration certificate; 2. your Texas driver's license number, if you provided it when you applied for voter registration; or 3. your first and last name. Or, you can call the voter registrar's office in the county where you reside. To find the number, [review the list of County Voter Registration Officials](http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/votregduties.shtml) (<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/votregduties.shtml>).

**If I send my registration by the deadline, what happens next?**

- A. Your voter registration becomes effective 30 days after it is submitted (and accepted\*) by the county voter registrar. The county office will then put your name on the voter registration list, generate your voter certificate and mail it to you. Once received, be sure to read the information on the back of the certificate, sign by the X on the "front" of the card (the yellow area) and keep your voter card in a safe place. This is what you will take with you to the polls to vote. Note that as long as your name is on the

voter list, you may vote without presenting this certificate, but you must provide another form of identification. See discussion below under "Voting without a Certificate." \*If your original application is missing required information, you will receive a notice in the mail and have a deadline to respond to the notice.

**I don't remember seeing my voter registration certificate lately. Is that a problem? Don't I just stay registered?**

**A.** New certificates are mailed out every two years to the most recent address you gave to the voter registrar. If you do not recall receiving a new yellow and white certificate in 2012, it could mean that you have moved without updating, or there is some other problem with your registration. If the certificate was mailed to an old address, it was returned to the registrar, and you were placed on the "suspense list" in that county. This means you have a grace period that allows you to vote in the same county in your old precinct, **but** If you do not vote, your name will be removed from the rolls after two federal elections have passed since you were placed on the suspense list. If you did not receive your certificate because you moved to a new Texas county, you will need to re-register.

**I am reviewing this page and nothing makes sense to me. These are not the rules I have heard. I'm in a state other than Texas — does that matter?**

**A.** If you are visiting our website from another state, please remember that each state has slightly different rules. These rules describe Texas state law and are intended for voters who consider their permanent home to be in Texas and want to vote a Texas ballot. If you arrived at this page through a search engine and you need another state's election law, check the [National Association of Secretaries of State](http://www.nass.org/) (<http://www.nass.org/>) page for other state websites.

**Can anybody vote early by mail (once referred to as absentee voting)?**

**A.** Only specific reasons entitle a registered voter to vote early by mail (no longer called absentee voting). You may request a ballot by mail if you:

1. will be away from your county on Election Day **and** during early voting;
2. are sick or disabled;
3. are 65 years of age or older on Election Day; or
4. are confined in jail.

[\[Expand all\]](#)

#### **Provisional Voting**

Provisional voting is designed to allow a voter whose name does not appear on the list of registered voters due to an administrative error to vote. The voter must complete an affidavit stating the reasons he or she is qualified to vote. Provisional voting is only used if the voter cannot qualify to vote by the methods described above. Important points are: (1) the cast provisional ballots are kept separately from the regular ballots; and (2) the voter's registration record will be reviewed later by the provisional voting ballot board (the early voting ballot board) and is counted only if the voter is determined to be a registered voter and is otherwise qualified to vote. Provisional voters will receive a notice in the mail by the 10th day after the local canvass advising them if their provisional ballots were counted, and if they were not counted, the reason why.

#### **Military & Overseas Voters**

Military and overseas voters are welcome to use the regular registration and early voting by mail process available to all voters away from their home county on Election Day. However, there are also [special provisions for military and overseas voters \(/military-overseas-voters/\)](#).

#### **Voters with Special Needs**

Please read our [special needs information \(/voters-with-special-needs/\)](#) to ensure that you are fully informed on the available services.

#### **Student Voters**

Student voters often seek advice regarding residency issues for voter registration purposes. For more information, please read [Information regarding student residency \(/voting/who#three\)](#) issues.

We also have FAQs on [Student Election Clerks \(/faq/student-election-clerks\)](#).

#### **Convicted Felons and Voting**

In Texas, a convicted felon regains the right to vote after completing his or her sentence. Therefore, once a convict completes the punishment phase (including any term of incarceration, parole, or supervision, or completed a period of probation ordered by the court), the convict is [eligible to register and vote in the state of Texas](#) (<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/pamphlets/largepamp.shtml>).

#### **Liquor Elections**

For [information on the local option liquor petition](#) (<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/laws/liquorelections.shtml>) and election process in Texas, please review our office's educational materials.

**Political Parties**

For information on registered political parties in Texas, please contact those organizations directly:

- [Republican Party of Texas \(http://www.texasgop.org/\)](http://www.texasgop.org/)
- [Texas Democratic Party \(http://www.txdemocrats.org/\)](http://www.txdemocrats.org/)
- [Libertarian Party of Texas \(http://www.lptexas.org/\)](http://www.lptexas.org/)
- [Green Party of Texas \(http://web.txgreens.org/\)](http://web.txgreens.org/)

**Additional Information**

We have information located in various sections of our website – “[Voter Information \(http://www.votetexas.gov/\)](http://www.votetexas.gov/),” “[Candidates \(http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/candidates/index.shtml\)](http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/candidates/index.shtml),” and “[Conducting Your Elections \(http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/conducting/index.shtml\)](http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/conducting/index.shtml)” (for election administrators), just to name a few. You will notice that some information is repeated in different places; our hope is to gear each section to the audience for easier bookmarking and future use.

Should you need additional information, [please email \(mailto:elections@sos.state.tx.us\)](mailto:elections@sos.state.tx.us) or call us at 1-800-252-VOTE (8683).

**Not Registered?**

To vote in Texas, you must be registered. Simply pick up a [voter registration application \(http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/reqvr.shtml\)](http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/reqvr.shtml), fill it out, and mail it at least 30 days before the election date.  
[MORE ABOUT REGISTRATION > \(http://votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/register-to-vote/\)](http://votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/register-to-vote/)

[Home \(/\)](#) | [Register to Vote \(http://votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/\)](http://votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/) | [Who, What, Where, When, How \(http://votetexas.gov/voting/\)](http://votetexas.gov/voting/) | [Military & Overseas Voters \(http://votetexas.gov/military-overseas-voters/\)](http://votetexas.gov/military-overseas-voters/) | [Voters With Special Needs \(http://votetexas.gov/voters-with-special-needs/\)](http://votetexas.gov/voters-with-special-needs/) | [Your Rights \(http://votetexas.gov/your-rights/\)](http://votetexas.gov/your-rights/) | [FAQ \(http://votetexas.gov/faq/\)](http://votetexas.gov/faq/) | [Resources \(http://votetexas.gov/resources/\)](http://votetexas.gov/resources/)

**Remind your friends to vote**

Spread the word, share important election information with your friends and family!  
[MORE ABOUT REMINDING > \(http://votetexas.gov/remind/\)](http://votetexas.gov/remind/)

**Voting is easy, so is getting the facts**

Texans must show an approved photo ID when voting in person.  
[MORE ABOUT PHOTO ID > \(http://votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/need-id/\)](http://votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/need-id/)

**(800) 252-VOTE** [www.sos.state.tx.us \(http://www.sos.state.tx.us\)](http://www.sos.state.tx.us)

[Switch to our mobile site \(http://votetexas.gov/faq/?wpmp\\_switcher=mobile\)](http://votetexas.gov/faq/?wpmp_switcher=mobile)